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Letter dated 1 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith my letter regarding the concerns of the Republic of Armenia arising from the recent intensification of the political situation after the brutal murder of the Armenian military officer by his Azerbaijani colleague in Budapest, Hungary (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Armen **Martirosyan**
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Annex to the letter dated 1 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Letter on the concerns of the Republic of Armenia arising from the recent intensification of the political situation after the brutal murder of the Armenian military officer by his Azerbaijani colleague in Budapest

On 20 January 2004, during the discussion of the item entitled "Children and armed conflict" in the Security Council, the Azerbaijani representative launched another round of unsubstantiated allegations towards Armenia and we took them as such. However, the recent brutal murder in Budapest of an Armenian officer in his sleep through axing by a young Azerbaijani officer at a NATO "Partnership for Peace" training programme could not but raise concerns over the increase of aggressiveness in Azerbaijani society as a result of such groundless accusations by the authorities, encouragements, distortions, exaggerations, in short, effective hate propaganda. It comes as no surprise that the cultivation and encouragement of war rhetoric by the authorities, which adversely affects the prospects of the peace process, would outpour into such gruesome acts. The response and the further comments made by the Azerbaijani officials on different levels trying to justify this horrendous act, and the statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan on 20 February 2004, are simply testimonies to it.

The significant flare-up of falsified propaganda from the Azerbaijani officials aimed at presenting a distorted picture of the roots and causes of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict and the resulting situation on the ground, which has greatly deteriorated during the last several months, and the unconcealed efforts to obliterate the 12-year efforts of the international community aimed at achieving final resolution to the conflict serve no other purpose than discrediting the international mediation and the peace process. Moreover, it threatens the ceasefire regime, the tenth anniversary of which would be marked in May of this year, and increases the instability and insecurity in the region as a whole. The speech of Ilham Aliyev, now President of Azerbaijan, in the general debate at the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the recent announcements by the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan and the numerous speeches of Azerbaijani representatives in different international forums, including the United Nations, are a demonstration of the concerted effort by the Azerbaijani leadership to fuel aggressiveness and war-mongering in the society to score internal points. However, a natural result of this kind of intoxication is the vicious act in Budapest, as the younger generation is the most susceptible to propaganda.

It is regrettable that the political short-sightedness of the Azerbaijani leadership does not allow it to learn lessons from tragic events of a not-too-distant past, when the deliberate manipulation of the Azerbaijani public led to massacres of Armenians in Sumgait, Kirovabad (Ganja) and Baku. Sixteen years ago to this date, on 27 February 1988, Azeris went on a three-day rampage in Sumgait, a new industrial town 20 miles from Baku, murdering members of the town's large Armenian minority, looting and destroying their property. Most of the victims were burnt alive after being assaulted and tortured. The murderers enjoyed total support of the Azerbaijani authorities and full freedom in committing their inhuman acts

against the Armenian population. The peak of the atrocities committed by Azeri perpetrators occurred from 27 to 29 February 1988. The events were preceded by a wave of anti-Armenian statements and rallies that swept over Azerbaijan in February 1988.

I consider it unnecessary to give a detailed historical overview of the pogroms in Sumgait here as the international community and the United Nations, in particular, have been duly informed in the past of the events through documents circulated on the occasion of the anniversaries of the Sumgait tragedy, the latest one being A/57/742-S/2003/233. The international community's response to the events was explicit. On 7 July 1988, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning the massacres in Sumgait, which read:

"The European Parliament,

"...

"B. having regard to the historic status of the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh (80% of whose present population is Armenian) as part of Armenia, to the arbitrary inclusion of this area within Azerbaijan in 1923 and to the massacre of Armenians in the Azerbaijani town of Sumgait in February 1988,

"C. whereas the deteriorating political situation, which has led to anti-Armenian pogroms in Sumgait and serious acts of violence in Baku, is in itself a threat to the safety of the Armenians living in Azerbaijan,

"1. Condemns the violence employed against Armenian demonstrators in Azerbaijan;

"2. Supports the demand of the Armenian minority for reunification with the Socialist Republic of Armenia;

"...

"4. Calls also upon the Soviet authorities to ensure the safety of the 500,000 Armenians currently living in Soviet Azerbaijan and to ensure that those found guilty of having incited or taken part in the pogroms against the Armenians are punished according to Soviet law."

The Sumgait events were organized with a view to hushing up and concealing the Nagorno Karabagh problem. While the population of Nagorno Karabagh, trusting in *glasnost* and *perestroika*, and after 70 years of unlawful subjugation to Azerbaijani rule, raised its voice in peaceful demonstrations for the legally and universally recognized right to self-determination, thus choosing the democratic, constitutional and peaceful path to the exercise of its right, the response of the Azerbaijani authorities was pogroms and killings of Armenians. The premeditated killings in Sumgait were to transform the problem of Nagorno Karabagh from a peaceful and democratic process into a violent confrontation, which turned into one of the world's bloodiest ethnic conflicts after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The atmosphere of total impunity, the repeated incitements to the perpetration of further Sumgait-like massacres and the encouragement to those who showed the greatest zeal by the Azerbaijani leadership greatly contributed to this.

The assault of a sovereign Government against its citizens continued. In May 1988 in Shushi, the local authorities initiated the deportation of Armenians living in that hilltop city from which Karabagh's largest city, Stepanakert, was to be so easily shelled for the next several years. By September 1988, the last Armenians were ousted from Shushi. In November and December 1988, a wave of Armenian pogroms swept Azerbaijan. The worst took place in Baku, Kirovabad (Ganja), Shemakh, Shamkhor, Mingechaur and Nakhichevan. In the winter of 1988, all Armenians were deported from dozens of Armenian villages in Azerbaijan. The same fate befell more than 40 Armenian settlements in the northern part of Karabagh — outside the borders of the autonomous region, which was demanding self-determination — including the mountainous regions of Khanlar, Dashkesan, Shamkhor and Kedabek provinces. The 40,000 Armenians of Azerbaijan's third largest city, Ganja, were also forcibly removed from their homes. When it was over, there were fewer than 50,000 Armenians left in Baku, out of a total of 215,000.

Throughout 1989, sporadic attacks, beatings, looting and massacres in Baku reduced that number to 30,000. By early January 1990, Armenian pogroms in Baku intensified and became more organized. Several hundred Armenians were killed, some of whom were burned alive, ripped apart or their bodies dissected. Pogroms continued until 20 January when Soviet army troops were brought to Baku. By then, the city was fully "liberated" from "Armenian elements" except for a couple of hundred Armenians in mixed marriages. During the military conflict over Nagorno Karabagh, the latter were literally "fished out" for exchange with Azeri prisoners of war.

The revisiting of history by Azerbaijanis is no surprise to us. However, it is appalling that in the same statement that my Azerbaijani colleague made in the Security Council, he referred to these very events as "Soviet invasion [when] on 20 January 1990, Soviet troops, 35,000 strong, stormed the capital of Azerbaijan in a desperate, extremely brutal and yet futile attempt to strangle the ever-growing independence movement and to stop the demise of the communist regime in Azerbaijan".

The Azeri leadership encouraged the ethnic cleansing and massacres of the Armenians of Azerbaijan or the Armenians of Karabagh, directly and indirectly, through creation of a conducive environment for violence and impunity for such crimes. Unfortunately the same policy continues today when, after the vicious act in Budapest, which was unequivocally condemned by the international community, so-called "committees for the support" of the Azerbaijani military officer are being created in Azerbaijan and the perpetrator of a cowardly act is, right before our eyes, being transformed into a hero.

Azerbaijan presents itself as the victim, giving a distorted picture of the facts on the ground today. There are refugees and territorial losses on both sides. The Armenian side has a refugee problem of 400,000 — almost equal to Azerbaijan's refugees. Indeed, today's facts on the ground are the consequences of a cycle of violence and intolerance that began with Azerbaijan's suppression of the calls to peaceful self-determination.

It is dangerous that the lessons of tragic history are being forgotten. Moreover, Azerbaijan is ready to throw the 12-year efforts of international mediation away and start from a "blank page", as stated by its Foreign Minister, threatening the peace

process and the relative stability established 10 years ago with a ceasefire. It seems we have come full circle here — from Sumgait to Budapest.

Meanwhile, at every step Armenia has stated and demonstrated its willingness to cooperate, wherever possible, to create and implement confidence-building measures. Without building such confidence, neither side can convince its own population to accept peace. At each step and every opportunity Azerbaijan has refused to demonstrate any flexibility or willingness to start a process of unfreezing the conflict in the minds of its own population. It is the reduction of tension, hostility and pumped-up hatred that will lead to resolution and peace, not the other way round.